



PanSALB

PanSALB was established under the SA Constitution, which says the following:

A [Pan South African Language Board](#) established by national legislation must

(a) promote, and create conditions for, **the development and use of -**

(i) **all official languages;**

(ii) the Khoi, Nama and San languages; and

(iii) sign language; and

(b) promote and ensure respect for -

(i) all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa,

including [German](#), [Greek](#), [Gujarati](#), [Hindi](#), [Portuguese](#), [Tamil](#), [Telugu](#) and [Urdu](#); and

(ii) [Arabic](#), [Hebrew](#), [Sanskrit](#) and other [languages used for religious purposes](#) in South Africa.

The **2013-2014 Annual Performance Plan** downloadable from the (now in 2015 practically dead) PanSALB web site says:

2.4 Programme 4: Languages Services, Programme Description

*This programme is made up of **NLBs [National Language Bodies]**, **NLUs [National Lexicography Units]**, **Language Use services** (language in education, translation, interpreting, and literature included), **Research**, and **Provincial Coordination services**.*

NLBs** are responsible for the implementation of the languages framework for each of the official languages including the Khoi and San languages and sign languages. This would involve authentication and screening of processes. **NLUs** are responsible for the production of lexicographic language products and service. **For example the production of dictionaries – monolingual to multilingual dictionaries.

***Language use** is responsible for the application of language in the different spheres of life e.g. language in education, literature, and specialist areas – banking etc. **Research** is responsible for exploration of information on languages. **Provincial coordination** is responsible for providing secretariat support to Provincial Language Committees (PLCs) and coordinating language services in the province.*

The **2011-2012 Annual Report** downloadable from the PanSALB web site has a statement by **Mr. Mxolisi Zwane**, the Caretaker CEO of PanSALB, which includes the following:

*PanSALB has been in the spotlight for the past two or three years for the wrong reasons. As a result concerns were raised by the Portfolio Committee of Arts & Culture in Parliament, the Ministry of Arts and Culture and various other concerned stakeholders. Areas of concern were around the governance of this institution as well as its **failure to fulfil its core mandate**... In response to this complaint the Minister of Arts and Culture, the honourable Mr Paul Mashatile, commissioned an investigation which was conducted by The Resolve Group, a report of which was delivered to him on 30 March 2012. The findings of this commission confirmed the concerns that were raised earlier:*

- It was clear that PanSALB as an organisation, was not fulfilling its legislative mandate and that while it continues to exist as an organisation and pays the salaries of its employees and infrastructure costs, it is not fulfilling the functions for which it was formed, structured and staffed.*
- There were challenges regarding governance issues in that the entity was not fully compliant with the Public Finance Management Act, Treasury Regulations and other legislative requirements.*
- The board of PanSALB had failed to meet its obligations, both in terms of oversight, fulfilling its fiduciary duties and ensuring the fulfilment of its functions in terms of the act.*

That being the case the minister dissolved the PanSALB Board and appointed myself as Caretaker Chief Executive Officer, the Accounting Officer and with the Accounting Authority mandate. The responsibility of my position was also to bring about a turnaround strategy that will enable the organisation to fulfil its mandate while addressing all governance issues.

I resumed my duties on 15 June 2012, and met with all staff members at head office to begin the process of intervention and mapping out the way forward. On 20 June 2012 I appointed a team of professionals to assist in the organisation review and stabilization process. Together with the team our focus was to stabilize the organisation, to stop mismanagement and maladministration, to revive staff morale and to refocus the organisation in fulfilling its core mandate.

There is a [PanSALB History](#) page on the PanSALB web site, which contains very little actual history, but which describes in detail, what PanSALB is supposed to do and how it is structured.

The PanSALB History page includes the following:

Lexicography and Terminology Development

*Another of PanSALB's focus areas is that of lexicography and terminology development. Nine **National Lexicography Units** were registered in 2001, their task being to compile monolingual explanatory dictionaries and other products to help with language development. The Afrikaans, English, isiZulu, and isiXhosa units have published a number of volumes*

of their monolingual dictionaries. The Tshivenda Lexicography Unit, based at the University of Venda, launched the world's first Tshivenda dictionary in July 2004, and said it expected to publish the final draft in 2006 or 2007. The lexicography units are based at tertiary institutions throughout South Africa. Each unit is managed by a board of directors and registered as a Section 21 (not-for-profit) company, which allows the unit autonomy to raise funds to carry on its work.

CU Comment

When the CU committed, in August 2012, to deliver a Languages course, problematising the question of languages in South Africa, we knew that there was a problem with PanSALB, because after eighteen years since its establishment in 1995, there was nothing visible to show for its work.

The particular products we were looking for, which we take to be the sign of a developing language, or of a language which has a chance, at least, to survive, is what are described in the passage above as **monolingual explanatory dictionaries**. A language which does not have such a dictionary is at best marking time. At worst it is on a slide towards oblivion. We will return to this question with practical suggestions and historical examples, later in the course.

From the PanSALB web site a year later, in August 2013, it is apparent that the picture is still very little changed.

There is a candid statement by Mr Mxolisi Zwane, the then Caretaker CEO, which describes the realisation by the government that PanSALB was not fulfilling its mandate, and his consequent appointment. Part of this statement is reproduced above.

The subsequent 2013-2014 Annual Performance Plan is detailed, and 86 pages long. We are going to concentrate on the tell-tale question of dictionaries. We find that they are supposed to be produced under PanSALB by semi-autonomous units, constituted as Section 29 not-for-profit companies, located in tertiary [educational] institutions. But there are still no “monolingual explanatory dictionaries” published for any of the indigenous African languages.

To conclude this introduction on PanSALB, here is a table showing what was given from the drop-down menu on the Home page for “Languages”, on 30 August 2013. This is where PanSALB is purporting to explain itself to the official language groups. Four of them, plus Sign, had nothing in them except the words “Under Construction”. In August 2014, the picture is substantially the same, or possibly worse. “Under construction” is the most common thing you will find on this web site.

It means that PanSALB is not concerned to check that its own web site is conforming with the rules on language that PanSALB, among other things, is supposed to police in terms of the Act and the Constitution. This is really a scandal.

In 2015, all of the pages that were “under construction” last year are still “under construction”.

NLU	Link
Zulu	http://www.pansalb.org.za/isizulu.html
Xhosa	<i>"Under Construction"</i>
Afrikaans	http://www.pansalb.org.za/afrikaans.html
English	<i>"Under Construction"</i>
Northern Sotho	http://www.pansalb.org.za/sesothosalebowa.html
Tswana	http://www.pansalb.org.za/setswana.html
Sotho	http://www.pansalb.org.za/sesotho.html
Tsonga	http://www.pansalb.org.za/xitsonga.html
Swati	<i>"Under Construction"</i>
Venda	<i>"Under Construction"</i>
Ndebele	http://www.pansalb.org.za/isindebele.html
Sign language	<i>"Under Construction"</i>

On 13 January 2016, Minister of Arts and Culture Nathi Mthethwa announced:

“I have dissolved the Board of PanSALB with immediate effect. The development of our languages and the promotion of multilingualism in South Africa need to be accelerated. The year 2016 must produce tangible results. Let us start on a clean slate and act decisively on challenges affecting PanSALB.”

As of 18 September 2016, nothing had been heard about the appointment of a new board.

- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).